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Message Text

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42
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-05 OMB-01 CU-02 NIC-01 AID-05 INT-05

EB-07 COME-00 /081 W
---------- 009129
R 131128Z JAN 75
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2086
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY SAIGON
CINCPAC POLAD

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 0230

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, EMIN, PFOR, MOPS, PROP, LA
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER

1. MY MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER WAS LESS BUSINESS-LIKE THAN I HAD HOPED AS IT FOLLOWED A VERY LIVELY AND ALCOHOLIC LUNCH WHICH SOUVANNA ENJOYED TREMENDOUSLY BUT WHICH CONSIDERABLY REDUCED BOTH HIS ATTENTIVENESS AND MY POWERS OF PERSUASION. IT WAS ONLY WITH SOME DIFFICULTY THAT I MANAGED TO GET HIM ASIDE FOR A BRIEF DISCUSSION AS HE APPEARED TO BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE FRIENDLY AND APPROPRIATE IF PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG, WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE LUNCH AND EQUALLY FULL OF GOOD CHEER, PARTICIPATED IN OUR TALK. I DID GET IN A LICK ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS.

A. THAKHEK. I EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE SALAMI TACTICS WHICH COULD LEAD TO THE "NEUTRALIZATION" OF THAKHEK AND SUBSEQUENTLY OF OTHER TOWNS IF THE DEMANDS OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS WERE MET OR IF THE MEASURES TAKEN BY THE VIENTIANE SIDE LEAD TO THE CREATION OF QTE MARTYRS UNQTE AND THEN TO NEW DEMANDS. THE
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PRIME MINISTER, WHO SEEMED WELL INFORMED ON THE STATE OF PLAY,

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SAID THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM.
HE HAD SENT INSTRUCTIONS TO DEFMIN SISOUK TO AVOID VIOLENCE
AND HE WAS SURE THAT EVERYTHING WOULD WORK OUT FOR THE BEST AS
IN BAN HOUEI SAI.

B. BAN HOUEI SAI. I SAID THAT WHILE THERE MIGHT WELL BE PEACE
AND QUIET IN BAN HOUEI SAI, I WAS DISTURBED BY THE CONTINUING
PRESENCE OF PATHET LAO FORCES IN THE NEIGHBORING VILLAGES. THE
DEMARCATION STAKE IN THE AREA HAD BEEN DRIVEN IN ON THE 10TH
BUT THE PATHET LAO HAD NOT BUDGED. THE STATEMENT BY GENERAL
VANASSENG THAT THERE WERE NO PATHET LAO AROUND BAN HOUEI SAI
WAS ABSURD. SOUVANNA LOOKED SURPRISED AND SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS
THE SITUATION WITH SOUPHANOUVONG.

C. PATHET LAO PROPAGANDA. IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SITUATION IN
THAKHEK AND OF THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF PATHET LAO TROOPS IN
THE BAN HOUEI SAI AREA, I DREW THE PRIME MINISTER'S ATTENTION
TO THE CONTINUED VILIFICATION OF THE U.S. BY PATHET LAO RADIO.
I CITED A PATHET LAO BROADCAST OF 8 JANUARY WHICH ALLEGES THAT
U.S. AND THAI SOLDIERS REMAIN IN LAOS. I SAID TO THE PRIME
MINISTER THAT THESE LIES DID NOT CONTRIBUTE TO NATIONAL
RECONCILIATION OR TO GOOD UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE PGNU AND
THE USG. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS THE TONE
AND CONTENT OF PATHET LAO BROADCASTS WITH PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG.

D. MINING. I SHOWED SOUVANNA AND SOUPHANOUVONG A MAP OF THE
EXPLORATORY DRILLING BY USAID AND THE RLG WHICH HAS REVEALED
THE EXISTENCE OF A RICH POTASH DEPOSIT AND I EXPLAINED WHERE
THE NEXT CORES WOULD BE TAKEN. I LATER MENTIONED TO SOUVANNA A
RECENT STUDY OF IRON ORE DEPOSITS IN MR 2 AND SUGGESTED THAT
HE MIGHT GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO IDENTIFYING A LEGAL FIRM WHICH
COULD PROVIDE THE RLG WITH THE EXPERTISE IT WILL NEED IN
NEGOTIATING WITH COMPANIES WHICH WILL PRESUMABLY BE SEEKING
EXPLORATION RIGHTS AND CONCESSIONS. SOUVANNA MADE NOTE OF THIS.

E. ELECTRICITE DU LAOS (EDL). I TOLD SOUVANNA THAT THERE WAS
STILL GREAT CONFUSION IN EDL AND THAT ORDERS SHOULD BE GIVEN
IN WRITING WHICH MADE CLEAR WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT. THE
LAO AGREEMENT WITH THE ADB CALLED FOR CONSULTATION ON PERSONNEL
CHANGES IN EDL AND FOREIGN DONORS WERE CONCERNED OVER THE
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PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS. SOUVANNA TOOK NOTE AND SAID HE WOULD
STRAIGHTEN IT OUT.

F. HOUSE-CLEANING. RETURNING TO THE THAKHEK PROBLEM, I CLOSED
BY EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR A LARGE-SCALE TRANSFER OF INCOMPE-
TENT AND CORRUPT OFFICIALS. SOUVANNA AGREED AND SAID THAT HE
WOULD CONDUCT A MAJOR SHAKE-UP WHEN HE RETURNS TO VIENTIANE.
AS A FIRST STEP HE WAS IMMEDIATELY REPLACING THE GOVERNOR OF

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THAKHEK WHO WAS AN IMBECILE WITH THE GOVERNOR OF LUANG PRABANG.

2. OTHER TOPICS WILL BE COVERED SEPTELS.

3. COMMENT. WHETHER AS A RESULT OF THE CAVIAR, VODKA, GINSENG AND OTHER HEALTH-GIVING NOURISHMENT CONSUMED, IT SEEMED TO ME THAT SOUVANNA WAS MORE VIGOROUS THAN HERETOFORE. HE INFORMED ME THAT HE PLANS TO RETURN TO VIENTIANE IN A FORTNIGHT. SOUPHANOUVONG WAS CHEERFUL AND FRIENDLY. HE PARTICIPATED IN THE BANTER ON SUCH FAMILIAR ASIAN TOPICS AS THE APHRODISIAC PROPERTIES OF GINSENG BUT WAS HIS USUAL EVASIVE AND INSCRUTABLE SELF WHEN I MENTIONED MY WILLINGNESS TO COME AND SEE HIM TO DISCUSS SUBJECTS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. HIS CONSTANT PRESENCE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOME REINFORCES SOUVANNA'S NATURAL OPTIMISM REGARDING THE STATE OF AFFAIRS AND I DON'T THINK I MADE MUCH OF A DENT ON SOUVANNA'S INCREASING INCLINATION TO MINIMIZE THE EFFECT OF THE PATHET LAO DRIVE FOR POWER AND AUTHORITY.
WHITEHOUSE

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